

THE CURE FOR EVIL

Be silent, children! Despite what you have been told—the Passions do not hear the prayers of slaves nor do they regard the cries of the weak.

• JUROU URAMESHII •

Jurou Urameshii was a quiet, unassuming human living in the Cathayan Kingdom of Tiet Dei. As a petty bureaucrat in an empire at war, it was easy to be overlooked, and Urameshii was constantly overlooked. Although adept at Wizardry and alchemy, he did not stand out among his peers. Although he was a wealthy man with a notable estate, his wealth was waning and his slaves rebellious. Bound by countless fears and boundless ambition, Urameshii did the unthinkable: he entered into a pact with a Horror.

The Horror was not as terrifying as tales often told but instead appeared as a sorrowful woman or frightened child in tattered clothing. In exchange for power, Urameshii had agreed to satisfy the Horror's insatiable desire to feed on innocence. He began a campaign to root out enemy spies in the land and began to round up and torture the peasants and downtrodden people. When this attracted too much attention, he turned his eyes to less noticeable prey—children. In the war-torn kingdoms of Cathay there are more widows and orphans than one would imagine. They are ever-present yet invisible. This is especially true for the orphaned children of peasants and slaves. Urameshii had found a seemingly endless supply of food for his new master. As the children suffered, Urameshii's power and influence grew, but even the prayers of slaves will eventually reach the heavens.

Urameshii began to believe in his own might and power and in an act of unparalleled foolishness attempted to overthrow the Horror and claim its power for himself. The Horror struck out, setting fire to Urameshii's entire estate. Those who died were immediately reanimated as ghouls and cadaver men. Urameshii, the man who tried to do so much evil in secret, was now made a spectacle for the entire empire. Many bold adepts rose up that terrible night and ensured that this evil would not spill into the rest of the city. Moreover, they stormed the estate vanquishing the Horror and ending its threat. Urameshii, badly wounded and stripped of his newfound powers, was forced to flee into the night. His remaining servants gathered the children into prison wagons and escaped towards the mountains. Urameshii knows that if caught he will certainly be executed for his crimes, so he plans to hide in the confines of his mountain retreat.

SETUP

The player characters arrive at the Imperial Capital at night to find an outer district under attack by undead minions. After cleansing the district alongside other heroes, they are honored with a banquet. During the banquet the heroes meet Gensai, a dwarf Scout and questor of Twoo who enlists the aid of the heroes. He explains events leading up to their nightmarish battle with the undead, but also informs them that the person responsible for this evil, Jurou Urameshii, is currently on the run. Making matters worse is the fact that he escaped taking his child prisoners with him. Gensai is familiar with the lands and knows that Urameshii is taking a route around and into the mountain towards a hidden airship dock. If he is not apprehended prior to arriving, he may never be found again. Having already lost precious time, Gensai proposes a journey through little known paths over the mountain as opposed to traveling around.

After facing many dangers, the player characters finally arrive at a small village in the mountain peaks. There they learn a unique and dangerous way of travel that will allow them to cover great distances at incredible speeds. Arriving at the port only moments after Urameshii's departure, the player characters learn of his hidden retreat in the mountains. With renewed determination, the characters storm his retreat, facing hideous and dangerous creatures to exact justice on the mad Wizard. During the encounter, at least one, but possibly several of the player characters suffer terminal illness after confronting the alchemically altered ghouls guarding the stronghold. Urameshii then forces the player characters to choose the cure in exchange for his freedom.

EVENT ONE: THE ARRIVAL

The player characters have been hired out to escort a caravan of merchants to the Imperial Capital. Arriving at night, they see a red glow on the horizon and smell smoke on the wind. Hastening their arrival, believing the city to be under attack by unknown forces.

The player characters arrive to find the city in chaos. Buildings are set ablaze, women and children run for safety as soldiers and civilians fight off nightmarish creatures in the city streets. The player characters immediately are thrown into the fray, cutting down cadaver men and ghouls. They valiantly slay the creatures, put out fires and rescue what lives they can. Soon the first light of day appears and the city is at peace again.

The player characters quickly learn that they have arrived on the tail end of an epic battle between champions and Horrors. Apparently the local noble Jurou Urameshii, who had dreams of ascending in his position, made a ghastly pact with a Horror that involved cannibalism of human flesh (preferably children's). The Horror was destroyed at the cost of many lives. In its death throes, the Horror transformed the dead into the abominable creatures that attacked the city. At midday the main hall of the city is open and a great feast is made in honor of the champions. Gifts of money and weapons are showered on all of the heroes who participated in the battle.

During the feast, the player characters have an opportunity to meet some of the champions who have survived the battle with the Horror. Although they volunteer information freely, it should be made clear that most are too injured to fight again. Gensai, a dwarf Scout and questor of Twoo, is the only champion who is still in fighting shape. Even in the midst of praise and adoration he seems very disturbed.

Gensai expresses his disgust for the feast and the gifts, stating that it is just a form of misdirection. He has just recently learned that although the Horror has been destroyed, the nobleman responsible has not been. He managed to slip away by chariot in the night as his estate burned to the ground. Even more troubling is the fact that his servants reported that at least three cage wagons filled with children were seen departing with him traveling towards the mountain. Gensai believes that many other nobles were part of this conspiracy and that they have been tricked into wasting precious time that could have been spent in pursuit. As a questor of Twoo he cannot allow this corruption go unchallenged. With his companions in no condition to travel, much less fight, he desperately entreats the aid of the player characters to pursue and rescue the children as well as bring Urameshii's evil to an end.

EVENT TWO: THE MOUNTAIN

The player characters quickly but stealthily slip out of the banquet and gather up what supplies they will need for the journey. Being a Scout, Gensai is very knowledgeable of the terrain and the path that Urameshii is taking around the mountains. He informs the adventurers that there is a little known dock on the far side of the mountain where pirate airships often stop to repair their vessels. With Urameshii being at least one full day ahead of them and traveling swiftly, there seems to be little hope that he can be intercepted before reaching an airship and fleeing to safety with his captives. Gensai proposes a bold plan. He believes that he can lead the player characters over the mountain instead of going around it. Although the player characters may be skeptical of his plans for good reason, Gensai insists that it can be done but will not at this time fully expound on how. Gensai urges that this is the only way to make up for the time lost already and asks the group to make their decisions quickly and don't linger in the city longer than necessary.

Gensai and the player characters quickly leave the city behind and journey to the steep face of the mountains. From the ground a plateau can be seen, from where the player characters should be able to trek on foot to the snowy peaks. Soon after the climb begins, storm clouds appear. Midway up the wall the rain begins to pour, increasing the climbing difficulty due to the slippery rocks. The player characters also notice that the earth in-between the rocks



ADRENALINE



The gamemaster should focus on the intense speed as well as the changing terrain to emphasize how far they have traveled and how fast. For tight situations use talents like Wind Catcher, Great Leap, Gliding Stride, or any flight spell to prevent disasters. Dexterity and Perception are the two important Attributes most for this method of travel. Tailed Namegivers such as the po-na and the t'skrang should get bonuses to maneuvering while characters with thermal and low-light vision should get bonuses to Perception.

has become slimy and gelatinous. To their surprise, every time they reach for a hand- or foothold the slime solidifies pushing them away. Before their eyes the gel begins to mold itself into creatures resembling bog gobs (see *Gamemaster's Guide*, p. 159). The creatures attack, attempting to use their Sticky Body Power on the heroes (adding a staggering 200 pounds to their weight). If they succeed, only the strongest of the heroes will be able to maintain their hold. If overtaken, they would face an assuredly fatal fall.

After taking a moment to gather themselves, the player characters have the choice to set up camp on the plateau for the night. Gensai reveals to them the mountain pass that leads to a snowy summit. The summit will take a full day to reach. At this time it is understandable if the adventurers are very skeptical that they can somehow cover such a great distance as to intercept the Horror-tainted noble, especially considering that he now has seemingly a two-day lead around the mountains. Gensai finally reveals that there is a tribe of Namegivers who live near the summit of the mountain. He continues to only give cryptic information concerning them, only stating that they have the ability to cover great distances at tremendous speeds. He assures them that his plan will work although it is dangerous.

EVENT THREE: XUE SHANG

Upon reaching the village of Xue Shang the player characters are warmly greeted and offered food and lodging for the night. The village is made up of various Namegiver races living simple lives away from society and war. They are ruled by an elder Monk and his family—many of which are skilled Elementalists. They move about from one end of the mountain to the other traveling on skis and large wooden boards enchanted with elemental air. The elemental air allows the boards to skim across the surface of the snow at great speed while at the same time protecting the rider from the intense cold and wind-shear that would come with traveling at high speeds through the snowy slopes. The Elder is sympathetic to the group's cause and agrees to assist them on their journey. In the morning, each member of the adventuring group is fashioned with their own board and given a crash course on how to use it. The Elder informs them of their route and provides a guide that will lead them the shortest (albeit most dangerous) route down the mountainside.

The journey consists of three parts: part one is merely a journey from the shelf of the mountain to the slopes. This part is where the riders learn to control their speed and maneuver. Part two is where the slopes begin and the player characters begin to travel at impossible speeds down the mountainside. In this part, maneuverability is the key as the player characters dodge large rocks and

other obstacles that would end their journey. The player characters are literally moving hundreds of yards in a matter of seconds covering great distances. The third part is the final and most dangerous part of the journey. The player characters pick up speed propelling themselves over chasms to continue their journey. In little over an hour they have reached the inner wall of the mountain and approach the airship landing docks.

EVENT FOUR: ABANDONED

The snowy slopes eventually even out and the adventurers reach their destination. To their dismay, the player characters arrive just in time to see an airship departing. On the rickety wooden docks below are an abandoned carriage and three cage wagons. Heartbroken and exhausted, the player characters reach the docks. The small port is populated with non-adept pirates, who were paid handsomely by Urameshii. Although fierce in appearance, the pirates do not threaten the player characters or attempt to harm them so long as they pose no obvious danger. If the player characters speak to them, they volunteer information about a mountain retreat often used by the noble that is only a few hours travel by airship. A second pirate ship arrives but will not lend its services to the heroes without pay.

After a short journey by airship, the player characters continue their journey on foot, following the mountain path leading to Urameshii's mountain retreat. The retreat is heavily fortified by an outer wall. Servants can be spotted fleeing the premises. When questioned, they reveal to the heroes that they were enthralled by their master but have recently broken his hold. It becomes clear that the Horror's death has greatly diminished his power and the time is ripe for his downfall. The servants provide entrance through the wall and inform the player characters that the children have been moved to the dungeon while their former master is in his observatory. The final warning is concerning ghoul-like creatures beyond the wall that will attack on sight.

CLIMAX

Beyond the wall is a courtyard of dying trees and plants. The player characters should be able to easily dispatch the remaining staff still loyal to Urameshii before encountering the ghouls. The ghouls appear to have been augmented by some type of alchemy. They are larger, stronger and tougher than regular ghouls, and if injured, their poison takes immediate effect (no Test required). After defeating the ghouls, those who were poi-

soned become terminally ill. No potions or poultices will have an effect and other healing efforts only provide short-term relief. The only hope is to find a cure in Urameshii's alchemy lab located in the observatory. When the player characters confront the fallen noble, he is a broken man. His powers have waned with the Horror's death and he has little hope of victory. He then plays his final card when he offers the cure in exchange for his escape.

If Urameshii is killed, the player characters must then search the cure in his lab (which should be a sufficiently difficult undertaking). If the player characters agree to Urameshii's demands, he will only reveal the location of the cure when he and his few remaining lackeys are on horseback. If all of the player characters are poisoned, he will stall for time, hoping that they will succumb to the poison.

With Urameshii either defeated or dead, the player characters have no problem freeing the children from the dungeon. The surroundings suggest that a horrible fate awaited the children had they not arrived in time. In the alchemy lab, the player characters will be able to restock on nearly all potions or poultices offered in the **Goods and Services** chapter (*Cathay Player's Guide*, p. 140). Search of the noble's chambers will reveal his grimoire as well as a fair amount of silver and jewels.

SEQUELS

Searching through the records located in Urameshii's study, the heroes find documents and letters proving the conspiracy among a group of nobles. Their plan was to use child sacrifices as fuel for their Horror-granted powers in an attempt to overthrow their rulers. With proof in hand, the heroes know that they have no choice but to expose this evil when they arrive home—that is if they arrive at all!

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